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November 20, 2006
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ELKTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO RECEIPT OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Also Admits to the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of a Minor

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Ernie Preston Hancock, age 48, of Elkton, Maryland, pleaded guilty today to receiving child pornography, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to the statement of facts presented to the court as part of his plea, on March 28, 2005, law enforcement officers searched Hancock's home and recovered a computer hard drive that revealed 131 images of child pornography, including several images of known child victims. Hancock acknowledged that he knew the images were of actual children under the age of 18 and that at least one of the images involved a minor under the age of 12.

Hancock also admitted that beginning in 2003, he sexually abused and exploited a minor. The victim, who was 13 years old when the abuse began, was a friend of Hancock's son and would often visit their home. The victim also traveled with Hancock to his job in Bear, Delaware, and Hancock engaged in sexual conduct with the victim on several of those encounters.

Hancock faces a mandatory minimum of five years in prison and a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and lifetime supervised release for receiving child pornography. Chief U.S. District Judge Benson E. Legg has scheduled sentencing for February 9, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. Hancock remains detained.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended the investigative work performed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Elkton Police Department. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Kwame J. Manley, who is prosecuting the case.
